

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15
ACDA-10 OMB-01 IO-13 /091 W
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R 091454Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5188
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 1697

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, IS, US
SUBJECT: ISRAELI PRESS REACTION TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S STATEMENT
RE "DEFENSIBLE BORDERS"

1. PRESIDENT CARTER'S REFERENCE TO ISRAEL'S NEED FOR
"DEFENSIBLE BORDERS" HAS DRAWN WIDE REPORTING AND COMMENT
HERE. THE JERUSALEM POST (BLITZER) MARCH 8 HEADLINED
A FOUR-COLUMN HALF PAGE ARTICLE WITH "CARTER OPENS TALDS
WITH RABIN, STRESSES 'DEFENSIBLE BORDERS'." IN THE
SEVENTH PARAGRAPH OF THIS ARTICLE, BLITZER MENTIONED
CARTER'S STATEMENT AND QUOTED ISRAELI OFFICIALS WHO
SAID THAT IT WAS "SIGNIFICANT" BECAUSE IT INDICATED A
RECOGNITION OF THE NEED TO CHANGE THE PRE-1967 LINES.
BURIED AT THE END OF BLITZER'S ARTICLE WAS SECRETARY
VANCE'S CLARIFICATION TO REPORTERS THAT THE PRESIDENT'S
STATEMENT REFLECTED NO CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY ON THIS
ISSUE. THE POST ON MARCH 9 REPORTED IN A SIMILAR
ARTICLE THAT STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS WERE GOING
OUT OF THEIR WAY TO TRY TO PLAY DOWN THE SIGNIFICANCE
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OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S STATEMENT. ISRAELI SUPPORTERS
IN WASHINGTON REPORTEDLY WERE DISAPPOINTED TO SEE
THE STATE DEPARTMENT BACKTRACKING BUT SAW IT AS
TYPICAL OF THE "EVEN-HANDEDNESS" OF THE U.S. FOREIGN
POLICY BUREAUCRACY.

2. MAARIV MARCH 8 EDITORIALIZED THAT DESPITE THE

GREAT INFLUENCE OF THE U.S. PRESIDENT IN MAKING AND IMPLEMENTING POLICY, HE DOES NOT ACT ALONE. THOSE OF HIS ADVISORS WHO LAST NIGHT (MARCH 7) HASTENED TO REASSURE ALL CONCERNED THAT CARTER HAD NOTHING NEW IN MIND IN SPEAKING OF DEFENSIBLE BORDERS WOULD ALSO TAKE CARE THAT THE U.S. MAINTAINS THE OBJECTIVITY WHICH IT BELIEVES IS NECESSARY TO CARRY ON AS MEDIATOR BETWEEN THE MIDDLE EAST ANTAGONISTS. MAARIV (BENN) MARCH 9 REPORTED THAT IT IS CLEAR THAT WHEN THE U.S. PRESIDENT SOLEMNLY DECLARES THAT ONE OF THE OBJECTIVES OF "STABLE PEACE" MUST BE "DEFENSIBLE BORDERS", HE WILL GIVE ISRAEL A JUSTIFICATION TO CONDUCT HER POLICY FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

3. HAARETZ (MARGALIT) MARCH 9 SPOKE OF A "WAR OF DENIALS" CONCERNING DEFENSIBLE BORDERS. CARTER SAID SOMETHING FRIENDLY AND CONVENTIONAL, BUT DURING THIS ISRAEL ELECTION YEAR GOI OFFICIALS QUICKLY "PLUCKED THE FRUIT" AND SOLD IT TO ALL AND SUNDRY. IN CONSEQUENCE AN ADMINISTRATION TEAM WAS THEN INSTRUCTED TO EXPLAIN THAT ALL CARTER HAD ACTUALLY SAID WAS THE SAME THING THAT NIXON SAID IN JULY 1970. BUT RABIN SEEMED NOT TO HAVE HEARD THE DENIAL. WHEN HE WALKED DOWN THE STATE DEPARTMENT STEPS, HE EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH CARTER'S REMARKS. THAT STATEMENT LED TO FURTHER CLARIFICATION. SECRETARY VANCE ACCOMPANIED HIM TO HIS CAR AND THEN RETURNED TO NEWSMEN TO EXPLAIN YET AGAIN WHAT THE PRESIDENT'S INTENTION ACTUALLY HAD BEEN.

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4. AL HAMISHMAR EDITORIALIZED MARCH 9 THAT EVEN IF THERE IS TRUTH IN WASHINGTON'S CLARIFICATION THAT NO "GEOGRAPHICAL" IMPORTANCE NEED BE ATTRIBUTED TO CARTER'S STATEMENT, THE ACTUAL USE OF THE TERM "DEFENSIBLE BORDERS" IMPLIES THAT CARTER UNDERSTANDS ISRAEL'S CONCERN FOR HER SAFETY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF AN OVERALL AGREEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

5. YEDIOT AHARONOT SAID MARCH 9 THAT ALL THAT CAN BE GLEANED FROM THE ATMOSPHERE SURROUNDING RABIN'S CONTACTS IN WASHINGTON IS THAT CARTER IS TRYING NOT TO BE TOO SPECIFIC TOWARDS ISRAEL. WHEN HE FAILS IN HIS EFFORTS AND VIOLATES THE SELF-IMPOSED RESTRICTIONS, HIS AIDES COME TO HIS RESCUE.

6. YEDIOT ALSO REPORTED MARCH 9 THAT A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ARAB INFORMATION CENTER IN WASHINGTON MET WITH UNDER SECRETARY HABIB YESTERDAY, AND EXPRESSED

CONCERN OVER THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS ON DEFENSIBLE BORDERS FOR ISRAEL. THE INFORMATION CENTER SUBSEQUENTLY PUBLISHED A STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT THE PRESIDENT'S REMARK "IS BEING INVESTIGATED VERY CAREFULLY BY AUTHORITATIVE ARAB CIRCLES IN WASHINGTON AND OVERSEAS." THE ARAB AMBASSADORS IN WASHINGTON HAVE TODAY REQUESTED AN URGENT MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY CONCERNING THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS, IN VIEW OF THE "IMMEDIATE CAPITAL ISRAEL MADE OUT OF THESE STATEMENTS," AS ONE AMBASSADOR PUT IT.

7. KOL ISRAEL CARRIED ON MARCH 9 RABIN'S STATEMENT TO THE PRESS IN WASHINGTON THAT IN HIS VIEW DEFENSIBLE BORDERS "DO NOT CONFORM IN ANY WAY TO THE PRE-1967 BORDERS." DUNNIGAN

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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